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ABSTRACT

The document presents a literature review, providing a summary of existing research findings relevant to all types of schooling interruptions. The section on the noncollege interruptee examines primary and secondary schooling: the types of programs available, characteristics of returnees, probabilities of program completion, and effect of interruption on educational and occupational aspirations. Most research implies significant economic and psychological gain to those who do return and complete high school. The college interruptee section examines institutional criteria for readmission of temporary dropouts, interruptions for military service, and women returnees, with research predominantly concerned with their academic success after readmission. Concluding comments state two general weaknesses in the literature: (1) lack of research regarding the manifestations of the purported advantages and disadvantages in the world of work for the returnee as compared to those who have had uninterrupted schooling, and for the returnee who drops out before graduating as compared to the dropout who does not return; (2) methodology. A reference list, 17 pages, is included. (LH)

The Antecedents and Consequences of Interruptions in Formal Schooling: A Review of the Literature

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Schooling Interruptions: A Summary of the Literature

The continually increasing emphasis on educational attainment for the satisfaction of occupational goals and for economic success has precipitated a flood of research pertaining to various aspects of school discontinuation. Such topics as rates of college attrition, comparative characteristics of dropouts and completers, reasons for dropping out, and methods of dropout prevention have been explored by a number of educators and psychologists. Summaries of this literature are available in several existing review articles (Knoell, note 3; Marsh, 1968; Montgomery, note 4; Summerskill, 1962; Tinto, 1975).

But what about the apparent dropout who later returns to school to complete his/her education? How does this person differ from the individual who never drops out, or from the one who leaves school and never returns? Is the dropout who returns more motivated than the one who does not? Does the educational interruption alter the student's subsequent achievements in the classroom or in the labor market? Does the time out of school offer experiences which contribute to the student's ability to succeed? Are aspirations changed during an hiatus from school? Answers to such questions frequently are relevant to institutional admissions policies, adult education programs, dropout rehabilitation

projects, counseling of potential dropouts, and manpower/employment policies.

Many studies have been published in response to the above concerns, but they are scattered throughout several subinterest categories within two major divisions of educational research. The first division contains studies dealing with the student who has dropped out prior to the completion of high school, and who subsequently returns to adult education classes, job training programs, correspondence courses, etc. These studies tend to have at least one of the following three purposes: (1) developing a profile of the sociodemographic characteristics of "returnees," (2) investigating the effects of the educational interruption on the motivation and scholastic ability of the returnees, (3) investigating the utility of the post-interruption educational experience as a basis for encouraging dropouts to pursue more advanced schooling.

The second division of research is comprised of studies that deal with interruptions at the college level. The topics of interest have included criteria for readmission, validity of these criteria, student attitudes towards readmission, and the academic performance of returning students.

Since the set of sources in the literature is so diverse, the purpose of this review is to facilitate educational research by providing a summary of the existing findings relevant to all types of schooling interruptions. We begin by reviewing the research on interruptions in primary and secondary schooling. Next we turn our attention to studies of the process of leaving and returning to college. In this context we focus, in turn, on institutional criteria for readmission of temporary dropouts, interruptions for military service, and women returnees. The review is concluded with a summary and a statement regarding our perception of the existing research gaps.

The Noncollege Interruptee

Students who have discontinued primary or secondary schooling face a unique set of conditions when, and if, they decide to continue their schooling and/or training. Chances are that they will be unable to return to the schools they previously attended, because of personal problems (i.e., family responsibilities), ill health (mental or physical), legal difficulties, or because school rules preclude readmittance. Thus, most of these individuals return to "school" through various manpower training programs such as the Youth Corps and Job Corps, through special community projects designed to help the dropout

such as the Work Opportunity Center, through adult or continuation education classes, or through the Armed Forces.

The initiation of programs to help such individuals in the development of salable skills and/or in the return to school is a growing concern in many communities. In 1965, the California legislature enacted a law ordering all schools to establish and maintain continuation classes. The intent was to make attendance at a continuation school compulsory for every youth who had not graduated from high school and who had not reached the age of 18. In this way, continuation education could be seen as a "safety net" under the dropout (Howard, 1972).

The public schools in New York City also have been involved in providing opportunities to dropouts. Thirty schools participated in the Job Education Program (1960) in which 7th-12th grade dropouts between the ages of 16 and 21 attended a 20-day pre-employment course of instruction. Participants were expected to return to school if they lost the job that they subsequently acquired after the course. In addition, Operation Return (1962) permitted dropouts, aged 17 to 21, to return to regular day classes if they had been out of school for more than six months and if they could graduate before their twenty-first birthday (King, 1964).

These examples illustrate the ongoing interest in encouraging the dropout to return to school. Other community programs scattered across the country are designed to enable the discontinuer to move ahead educationally and economically by (a) providing individualized instruction in an adult, relaxed setting; (b) offering remedial reading and math skills in addition to vocational courses; and (c) encouraging students to obtain a high school diploma.[1]

The major national thrust toward the rehabilitation of dropouts is credited to the Youth Corps and Job Corps. One method that the Youth Corps uses to persuade individuals to return to school is to pay them legal-minimum wages at part-time and/or summer jobs. The Job Corps provides vocational training, basic education, and advice on "home and family living" to persons 16 to 21 years of age. Evaluations of both of these programs have indicated, however, that they are less effective in aiding the dropout than they were expected to be. Both programs seem to be most beneficial to black women (Howard, 1972).

The fact that many dropouts return to school has provided the data bases for a number of investigations of the characteristics of returnees. For instance, Saleem and Miller (1963) found that a greater number of males than females were represented in a

sample of 625 students who left junior or senior high school in Syracuse during the 1959-1960 school year. However, more young men than young women in the sample also returned to school. Saleem and Miller further reported that relative to the nonreturnees, the (sixty) returnees in the sample tended to have been in higher grade levels at the time of discontinuance, were more likely to have been in "normal" grade levels according to their age, and tended to have higher IQ scores. More of the returnees were from unbroken homes, but no difference was found between returnees and nonreturnees in socioeconomic level. A study performed by Wehrwein (1970) using a sample of returnees at the Work Opportunity Center in Minneapolis yielded similar conclusions.

Other studies have focused more intensively on the personal and family characteristics of returnees. For example, a study conducted at the Cape Fear Technical Institute (Doss, 1966) revealed that returnees were more likely than nonreturnees to have problems and responsibilities at home, to perceive their parents as either too strict or too lenient, and to like the Institute. The returnees also appeared to receive greater encouragement from teachers or employers to finish school and to have friends attending school. In addition, relatively more nonreturnees had access to a car while in school, had received

corporal punishment and had siblings who were dropouts. A similar investigation pursued by the Edmonton Public Schools in Alberta, Canada (1971) generated comparable findings. Moreover, in comparison to nondropouts, the returnees were found to have had a greater number of absences, different educational goals, greater financial independence, and more intolerance of existing social conventions. Personal and family characteristics of returnees also were studied by Wehrwein (1970), who found that approximately one-fourth of the individuals who returned to the Work Opportunity Center were on probation or parole, that two-fifths had health problems, and that more than half had family difficulties.

Many persons who return to school never complete the programs in which they enroll. A few studies have attempted to identify the characteristics distinguishing those who complete the program to which they have returned from those who do not. In one such investigation, Hess (1966) reported that adult education students who remain in classes were those who had left school at an older age, who had higher achievement (especially in reading) while they were attending regular school, who currently had fewer disciplinary problems and absences, and who were better off financially. In another study Verner and Davis (1963) concluded

that the longer the duration of the educational interruption the higher was the probability of noncompletion after return.

This last finding raises an interesting question with respect to the dropout who does return and remain in school. That is, how does the interruption itself affect the individual's ability to achieve and his/her educational and occupational aspirations. The most extensive study dealing with this question was aimed at determining the impact of a return to school on the intellectual development, achievement levels, aspirations, self-concepts, and attitudes toward school of a group of black children who had been out of school for four years due to a school closure in Prince Edward County, Virginia (Green, 1967). While a majority of the 288 students had no schooling whatsoever during the four-year period, some had been enrolled for at least part of the time in neighboring school districts. Thirty-one children who had received no schooling were compared with thirty-five who had had some schooling.[2] Test scores and attitude measures were obtained for both groups prior to the reopening of schools. Post-testing occurred eighteen months later. Initial measurements found students with no schooling behind the students with some schooling in every dimension except attitude toward school, which was more positive among those with no schooling. However, subsequent

measures indicated that students with no schooling could make significant gains in intelligence relative to the other group. Furthermore, educational and occupational aspirations increased more for those with no schooling. Thus, in this particular case, an educational interruption seems to have contributed positively to attitudes toward school, while at the same time affecting aptitudes and aspirations adversely.

Several studies have examined various aspects of programs designed to help the high school discontinuer. One such study (Greene, 1962) attempted to determine the degree to which dropouts avail themselves of an educational opportunity when one is offered. Fifty-seven fathers of sixth grade children in a community which had a "visible" continuing education program were surveyed. Forty-eight of the fathers were identified from school records as having dropped out of high school, while the remainder had at least a high school diploma. Without exception the graduates were more likely than the dropouts to have received additional training in the military, in trade schools, in apprenticeships, in correspondence work, and/or in community adult education classes. In addition, among those who participated in such programs, the graduates remained longer than the nongraduates.

In that the emphasis on returning to school has been a rather recent development, one might argue that it is unlikely to have affected persons who had been out of school for ten or more years at the time of the Greene study. Yet, recent analyses of two national samples of persons aged 14 to 24 (5,225 males and 5,159 females) have found that high school graduates are more likely than dropouts to have received training. Of the young men and women who had completed high school and never attended college, just under 50 percent had participated in at least one formal training program outside regular school. In contrast, less than 30 percent of the high school dropouts had had training, and among those who left school before the ninth grade the comparable proportion is under 20 percent (Parnes, Miljus, Spitz & Associates, 1970; Shea, Roderick, Zeller, Kohen & Associates, 1971.)

Failure of a returnee to remain in school or to achieve satisfactorily may be attributable to characteristics of the program rather than to the fact of the interruption or to any personal characteristics of the student. Kent's (1972) evaluation of the effectiveness of a program in Falls Church, Virginia, utilized pre- and post-test scores from the reading and mathematics sections of the Test of Adult Basic Education. Less than one-fourth

of the students gained a full grade level in reading or mathematics, although group differences between high and low scores did disappear. For example, whites, females, and the unemployed scored significantly higher on the pretest than did blacks, males, and employed students, respectively. However, no significant differences were found between groups on the post-test.

In an evaluation of the Work Opportunity Center in Minneapolis it was found that 56 percent of the students who returned to regular school following their enrollment in the Center were still in school (Joseph & Almen, 1968). Furthermore, 77 percent of these individuals were receiving passing grades. Most of the returnees considered the Center to be helpful to their return and success in school.[3]

In summary, the literature on the high school dropout who returns to school is diverse. It indicates that discontinuing high school is disadvantageous to the intellectual and aspirational development of the individual, but that a return to school can substantially alleviate the disadvantage. Numerous programs are available to persons desiring to return and complete their education, and public support is such that some school districts are seriously attempting to require students either to complete high school or to attend a substitute training

program. Several characteristics tend to be related to the individual's desire to complete school, although family problems seem to have the greatest negative effects. The research is optimistic in predicting gain to those who do return and remain in school, even though the gains would seem to diminish the longer the interruption prior to returning.

The College Interruptee

For a substantial majority of the American population, graduation from high school is not considered a legitimate end to an individual's education. Rather, additional training for a particular occupation is generally recommended through industrial or community training programs, junior or community colleges, universities, and professional schools. Even so, a large number of individuals enter college but leave before completing the particular program they have begun. In addition, every year many persons graduate from high school with the intention of staying out of school for a year or two before entering college (Babbott, 1971). The extent of this behavior among young people has been measured in several studies. In two national projects directed by Iffert (1956, 1958) rates of attrition from college were computed according to sex, type of institution, socioeconomic status, motivation, academic performance, participation in

extracurricular activities, region of residence, and reason for leaving. However, these cross-sectional profiles did not attempt to address the possibility that the college dropouts might return to their schooling at some later point in time.[4]

Recognizing the misleading nature of previous attrition studies, Eckland (1964a, 1964b, 1964c) published several articles which have become classics in college dropout research. In his dissertation (1964d), which compared dropouts and graduates ten years after initial matriculation, Eckland concluded that failure to consider the returnee produced considerable overstatement of the rate of attrition. He found that at the University of Illinois only 27 percent of the male freshmen in Autumn 1952 had graduated by June 1956, but that 50 percent had graduated by June 1962. When transfer students were considered, a total of 71 percent of the original students had graduated from some institution within ten years of matriculation. The latter percentage is considerably higher than the national estimate of 40 percent produced by Iffert.

Subsequently, several additional studies have investigated or commented upon the numbers of individuals who leave school temporarily.[5] Most of these have found that more than 50 percent of college dropouts return and complete their educations. These returnees increase the final graduation rate considerably, to as

much as 85 percent in some schools (Pervin, 1966). Thus, the probability of completion of post high school programs is not as gloomy as educators originally thought. However, the fact that many students do temporarily drop out of school raises some interesting questions.

First among these is the reason for an educational interruption. In a study of activities by young people during an interruption from college, Holmes (1959) found that work, either in local enterprises, governmental agencies, or abroad was most frequently reported. Other activities included attending various institutes for the development of particular skills (e.g., art); enlisting in the military, the Peace Corps, Vista, etc.; and traveling. Additional studies have shown that pregnancy, marriage, lack of financial resources, church mission, illness, dissatisfaction with school, poor academic performance and psychological difficulties are also self-reported reasons for dropping out of school temporarily.[6] A sociological analysis by Featherman and Carter (note 1) suggests that such background factors as socioeconomic status or age-grade retardation have little relationship to the probability of interrupting college attendance.

The long-term effects of a college interruption on the academic and economic success of an individual have been discussed

extensively in the literature. Issues of academic readmission and performance are presented in the next section of this review. Special problems of veterans and women often receive particular consideration and therefore are reviewed separately in the following two sections.

Readmission of the Student Who Interrupts College Attendance

Several studies have focused on appropriate criteria for readmitting students who have left college temporarily. The concern has been with monitoring enrollments in order to optimize the benefits of additional schooling for both the student and the college or university. In other words, while the institutions do not want to deprive any individual of the right to maximize his or her potential, limited resources require a filtering out of students who do not appear to be likely to benefit from the school experience. Since returning students differ from students who are enrolling for the first time according to the amount of information available about their abilities, this particular group of potential students has received special attention in terms of (re)admission policies. Most of the literature dealing with readmission focuses on the appropriateness of certain policies with respect to the student who was dismissed for inadequate academic performance or to the student who voluntarily dropped out.

Correlates of successful readmissions were the focus of a number of articles. Grade point average (GPA) and duration of enrollment prior to dismissal were most commonly found to bear a significant relationship to academic success after readmission, although at least one study found no aspect of educational history to be significant (Lautz, MacLean, Vaughan & Oliver, 1970). Studies demonstrating a high positive correlation between GPA and subsequent success include Bierbaum and Planisek (1969), Dye (1965), Grieder (1967) and Hansmeier (1965).[7] However, Dye concluded that high school class rank was the "best" single predictor of college success. This finding is directly opposed to Hansmeier's statement that college GPA is the only "effective" predictor of successful readmission.

Bierbaum agreed with Peszke and Arnstein (1966) and Yoder (1962) that duration of original enrollment was significantly related to success on readmission. Length of enrollment prior to dropping out of school was the only significant variable shown in the Peszke/Arnstein article, while Yoder found that the student's GPA, the number of times he or she changed majors, and the number of semesters completed since the time of readmission[8] were all positively related to the likelihood of completing college. In addition, Yoder concluded that the readmitted student has, in fact, a greater chance of graduating than has an entering first-semester freshman.[9]

Different approaches to the readmission of the academically dismissed student were pursued by Dole (1963), Giesecke and Hancock (1950), Schuster (1971) and Warman (1954). Dole attempted to construct a scale to predict successful readmissions. He discussed the construction and cross-validation of two scales, one consisting of eleven items and another of four items which purport to measure the student's motivation and ability to complete school. The results of the analysis led Dole to claim that such scales may be more reliable than the traditional GPA and attendance record variables. Giesecke and Hancock also discussed a procedure for readmitting students which ignores the "academic record judgment." Their suggested procedure would require the student to undergo counseling as a condition for readmission. Although the article provided several examples of cases in which the procedure worked, it offered no statistical test of the effectiveness of the system.

Both the Schuster and Warman studies were designed to test the validity of given decision-making processes relating to readmission. More specifically, Schuster sought to determine the relationship between the variables that were used to influence committee decisions on readmission and the variables that predicted GPA after readmission at Iowa State. No relationship was found.

Similarly, Warman was interested in determining the relationship between the counselor's prognosis for the student and the petitions-committee's decision to readmit in two colleges at Ohio State University. The results indicated that only a moderate relationship existed between the prognosis and the decision. Further analysis showed that the counselors were more successful than the committee in identifying the students who would make a satisfactory record.

Several studies have discussed the returning student without specific reference to his or her previous academic record. One of these sought to determine whether characteristics of the returning student differed from those of the student who had not experienced an interruption. Bluhm and Couch (1972) found that most of the readmitted students at the University of Utah were sophomores, male, and had been out less than a full year. Work was the primary reason for withdrawal. In comparison with uninterrupted students, the readmitted persons achieved higher grade averages, although they tended to carry fewer courses per semester.

Another investigation by Campbell and Hahn (1962) looked for empirical justification for the argument that absence from school tends to be followed by improvement of academic work. The

results suggested that although all of the students did improve following an academic interruption, those who had been engaged in "activities of import" (i.e., employment, military, church mission, etc.) made a significantly greater improvement than those who did not spend their time in this manner. Further, duration of interruption was found to be positively related to improvement.

The studies by Planisek et al. (1968), Sorenson (1971), and Wharton (1965) reviewed the criteria for readmission decisions at different institutions. Planisek found that the Cooperative School and College Ability Test and six factors from a sixteen-personality-factor test correlated significantly with GPA for the first quarter after readmission. Sorenson also concluded that tests measuring psychological characteristics (particularly those related to coping skills) are needed in predicting readmission success. However, the Wharton study reaffirmed the utility of previous GPA in prediction. In another article, Whitla (1961) supported the liberal readmission policy of Harvard, where 95 percent of the dropouts who requested readmission were accepted. However, only about 40 percent of these students received their degrees.

The Davis (1968) survey was also concerned with student readmission. However, this report focused on the differing policies

of thirty regional institutions regarding the return of students who had been out of school for five or more years. Results of the survey indicated that eighteen of the schools would readmit those students who had attended a regionally accredited institution and who had compiled an average of "C" or better prior to leaving. One school maintained the policy that anyone could return regardless of grade average if he or she had been enrolled in a regionally accredited school. Admission with qualification and possible loss of credit was the most prevalent policy.

An additional study by Kendall (1964b) dealt with the later achievements of interrupted students who completed the degree as compared to students who attended school continuously. The major finding indicated that noninterrupted students tended to earn more in their late careers than interrupted ones.

In summary, most of the literature dealing with the readmission of the college dropout focuses on the kinds of criteria which should be used in decision-making. Grade-point average and duration of enrollment prior to dismissal were identified most commonly as significant, though policies and procedures for readmission vary substantially among colleges. Students who had been dismissed from college for academic reasons have received special scrutiny with respect to re-enrollment. Scales and

counselor opinions have been suggested as viable alternatives to the GPA for these students. Readmitted students have been found to achieve, on the average, higher GPA's than uninterrupted students. However, the students who have interrupted their schooling may earn less than other students in their subsequent careers.

Military Interruptions

Most of the research that analyzes the effects of a military interruption on an individual's schooling is based upon data obtained from World War II veterans. The primary focus of these studies is a comparison of the veteran to the nonveteran in terms of grade point average, area of specialization and involvement in extracurricular activities. Socioeconomic status, marital status and age are used as control variables in some of the research.

While the findings of such studies are not entirely consistent, most have reported that the returning veteran achieved better, on average, than the nonveteran. Among these, Epler (1947) and Orr (1947) found that married veteran returnees had higher achievement than the unmarried ones. Thompson and Pressey (1948) concluded further that married veterans with children achieved better grades than either single veterans or married veterans with no children. Additionally, they reported along with Gideonse (1950) and Welborn

(1947) that veterans tended to be older than nonveterans and that post-service achievement records generally were better than pre-service records. Moreover, Gideonse suggested that older veterans performed better in school than did younger ones.

With reference to pre-service records, four studies (Hansen & Paterson, 1949; Lauro & Perry, 1951; Thompson & Pressey, 1948; Weintraub & Salley, 1948) revealed lower grade averages for veterans than for nonveterans. While the averages for both groups were found to increase substantially upon return, the veterans were the more successful group of students. Another article (Gowan, 1949) indicated that the gain scores between high school and college achievement were higher for veterans than for non-veterans. This is supported by Thompson and Pressey who reported that while a larger proportion of veterans had been in the lower third of their high school class, performance of the veterans on the entrance test was equal to or better than that of the nonveterans.

Although most of the literature has focused on the total academic performance of veterans, some research has concentrated on achievement in a particular course in order to control for differences in specialization which might bias the results. Of these, the only investigation revealing significant results was

performed by Taylor (1947) who used data from freshman English classes over two academic quarters. In each quarter the veterans enjoyed a disproportionately high share of the A's in the course. Two additional studies found the veterans doing slightly better than nonveterans in a general chemistry course (Clark & Staskiewicz, 1947) and in a required educational measurement course (Kvaraceus & Baker, 1946).

The relatively higher academic successes of veterans have been explained in various ways. Thompson and Pressey (1948) attributed success to an interaction of maturity, experience, motivation and relative freedom from financial stress.[10] Using multiple correlation analysis, Owens and Owens (1949) supported the maturity premise by finding age to be as good a predictor of success as college aptitude scores. Additionally, Shaffer (1948) and Gideonse (1950) hypothesized that age, rather than military service, was the primary factor explaining the higher grades of veterans. Controlling for year of birth, Shaffer found that nonveterans outperformed veterans of the same age in every case.[11] Garmezy and Crose (1948), however, found age and grade point average to be uncorrelated. Alternative suggestions attribute veteran success in school to lesser involvement in extracurricular

activities (Gowan, 1949) and to fewer credit hours of course work per quarter or semester (Thompson & Flesher, 1946).

In addition to Shaffer, a few studies did not support the hypothesis that veterans achieve better than nonveterans. Controlling for academic unit and class standing, Garmezy and Crose (1948) and Tibbits and Clark (1947) found that veterans were not significantly different from nonveterans with respect to grades. A more recent investigation at Michigan State University also failed to produce significant differences in academic performance in favor of veterans (Hansmeier, 1965). Moreover, Stewart and Davis (1946) discovered that World War I veterans, controlling for the number of semesters enrolled since returning, performed worse than other students in all colleges except engineering, where they did better.

All of the research reviewed thus far with respect to military interruptions has dealt specifically with the success of the returnee. Another perspective taken by some investigators has been to analyze the likelihood that a veteran will return to school. An investigation by Whittemore (1953) analyzed 400 World War II veterans who were students just prior to entering the military. The results showed that more than 70 percent either returned to the institution from which they had left or requested

transcripts for transfer. More than 54 percent earned at least a first degree from some institution. A later study by Weinstein (1969) was based on interviews with over 3,000 Army and Navy veterans and included data on personal and socioeconomic background, military occupational specialities, pre-service and post-service employment and educational plans. Approximately one-third of the Army veterans and three-fifths of the Navy veterans returned to school after being discharged. Individuals with higher pre-service educational attainment were more likely to return to school than those with lower pre-service attainment. In an evaluation of the World War II G.I. Bill of Rights, Eggertsson (1972) found that 41 percent of the college education acquired by the respondents in the 1967 Census survey of veterans had been accumulated during the post-service period and 11 percent had been achieved during military service.[12] Eggertsson further found that, of those who attended college prior to service, the younger veteran had the greatest propensity to return to school after discharge. The post-service years of schooling were found to be profitable in terms of annual earnings for the veteran returnee.

In summary, most of the literature suggests that upon returning to school the military veteran achieves better academically than the nonveteran. In addition, the post-service

performance of the veteran as a student is generally better than his pre-service record. Of the several suggested reasons for these differences, the maturity gap between veterans and non-veterans has been given the greatest research emphasis. Large proportions of veterans apparently return to school following discharge, a behavior which evidently pays off in terms of the individuals' later careers. However, with few notable exceptions (e.g. Eggertsson, 1972), these conclusions are drawn primarily from tabular analysis which often fails to control adequately for variables (e.g. age) that are correlated both with veteran status and achievement measures. It is not possible, therefore, to be as confident about the inferences as if they were based on carefully designed multivariate analyses.

Women Returnees

The special problems of women who return to school, frequently after an interruption lasting for several years, are varied and considerably different from the problems experienced by men who drop out of school temporarily on their way to acquiring a degree. Often the reason the woman leaves is related to marriage and/or pregnancy. Thus, the life-style change which accompanies greater familial responsibility hampers her ability and/or willingness to return to school. Three studies have

examined the effects of this changed life-style on a woman's psychological and intellectual well-being when she does decide to return to school. In one, Likert (1967) recorded the expressed feelings of women students about academic anxieties, husband's attitudes, financial problems, and other topics related to the school adjustment. In the second study, Letchworth (1970) provided an overview of the emotional status of the returning woman with special reference to (1) problems of time management caused by the addition of academic activity to the responsibilities of being a housewife and (in some cases) mother; (2) feelings of guilt related to absence from home or strain on family budget; (3) feelings of shame when a woman has difficulty living up to academic standards she set for herself; and (4) feelings of isolation due to sensed inability to relate to younger classmates. Brandenberg (1974) expanded this list of problems to include (1) the emotional stress associated with the decision to return to school; (2) uncertainty about ability to achieve and about academic goals; (3) self-defeating behavior initiated by an unconscious desire to avoid success; and (4) confusion due to inadequate counseling.

There have been but few studies, however, which actually measure the performance of women who return to college after an

interruption. One of these arrived at some pessimistic conclusions with respect to how successfully they cope with their problems. Using the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey along with a special questionnaire, Fagerburg (1967) found that returning women (at Purdue) had less confidence in their ability to do academic work than their counterparts who had not interrupted attendance. Further, younger, unmarried returnees were less successful academically than older, married ones. In contrast, Lautz et al. (1970) found that single female returnees were the more successful group. Another investigation, by Fought (1970), supports the successful adaptation of women returnees by concluding that they achieve noticeably higher grades than typical undergraduate women in similar programs. Further, Markus (1973) found that despite problems with managing time, returning women perform well and are motivated toward achieving specific goals (i.e., a degree, gaining a skill, etc.).

Concluding Comments

The plethora of empirical research on educational interruptions has revealed a series of useful pieces of information about the characteristics of persons who experience discontinuities in schooling. A commitment to encourage elementary and secondary school dropouts to return to school, is evidenced by a diversity

of programs at the community and federal levels. Most research implies significant economic and psychological gain to those who do return and complete high school, or a substitute training program. The literature referring to the return of college dropouts is predominantly concerned with their academic success after readmission. Although research findings are not uniform, three general conclusions appear quite frequently: (1) GPA is the most reliable single predictor of the scholastic potential of returnees; (2) veterans tend to be more successful academically than uninterrupted nonveterans; and (3) women seem to suffer a great amount of psychological discomfort with a return to college.

Despite the volume and variety of literature on educational interruptions, two general weaknesses are evident. Substantively, the research does not adequately assess the effects of returning to school on an individual's subsequent work-related behavior and success. The reported gains accruing to primary and secondary school returnees are based predominantly on attitudinal data. Few studies have measured actual manifestations of the purported advantages. Virtually no evidence is presented as to whether returnees to college who graduate fare better or worse in the world of work than do graduates who have not experienced interruptions. Also, the relative advantage, if any, of the

college returnee who drops out again prior to graduation (over the dropout who does not return) has not been addressed in the literature.

The second general weakness is in methodology. The statistical tools that have been employed most frequently in the research lack the power to yield unequivocal conclusions primarily because they do not involve controls for correlated variables. Further, the limited populations represented in many of the studies circumscribe the generalizability of findings, especially with respect to the total nation. Some well-planned multivariate analyses using large, representative samples would be welcome contributions to the literature on the impacts of schooling interruptions.

Footnotes

[1]For additional information see Birkmaier (1964); Carter (1971); Deck (1962); Fantini and Cangemi (1963); Fisher (1970); Gibson, (note 2); Hickman (1964); Losi (1964); University of the State of New York (1964); and Wehrwein (1970).

[2]The some-schooling group contains students who may have attended throughout the four-year closure period as well as students who were actually out of school for most of the time. Consequently, it does not represent a pure control group and comparisons may be biased accordingly. However, the fact that the differences are in the expected direction tends to attenuate this criticism.

[3]Another analysis of the benefits of an adult education program was based on the responses to a fourth-year follow-up questionnaire administered to graduates of the Jackson County (Iowa) Evening High School (Gran, 1973). The findings are almost impossible to evaluate because of serious methodological flaws in the study.

[4]In the earlier article, Iffert did mention a "miscellaneous" group numbering 5 percent of the individuals studied who had changed from full-time to part-time status, dropped out

temporarily, or changed programs within the institution. Thus, they graduated late, which led to their being miscoded as college dropouts.

[5]See Fought (1970); Gusfield (1964); Iffert (1964); Irvine (1965); Jex and Merrill (1967); Kendall (1964a); Lembke (1969); Max (1969); Pervin (1965, 1966); Riesman (1964); Sorenson (1971); Wright (1964); and Young (1964).

[6]See Jex and Merrill (1967); Peszke and Arnstein (1966); and Edmonton Public Schools (1968).

[7]Langer (1968) reported significant differences between successful and unsuccessful returnees in the number of "F" letter grades accumulated prior to their dismissal.

[8]The number of semesters completed following readmission appears to be a somewhat trivial factor in that length of enrollment is almost always correlated with completion, regardless of whether the student attended continuously.

[9]The comparison of 59.7 percent who graduated from the group of readmitted students to the 40 percent who graduated from the entering freshman should be considered cautiously since, obviously, some self and administrative selection took place among the returning students. Further, the study did not control

for transfer and/or later readmission to another institution by the group of entering freshmen. Thus, as illustrated by Eckland (1964d), the percentage used in this study probably understates the actual number of newly entering freshmen who eventually graduate.

[10]Though not supported in other studies, Thompson and Pressey assume that the G.I. Bill sufficiently relieved the veteran from financial worries. For an alternative view, see Justice (1946).

[11]When one considers that the older group of nonveterans also must have experienced an educational interruption in order to be included in the sample, then one realizes that Shaffer actually may be measuring differences in affect between military and nonmilitary interruptions.

[12]Cox (1962) argues that the military itself is a potential source for returning to school. If so, analyses of military interruptions in terms of veterans alone may underestimate the number of school returnees who become certified prior to leaving the service.

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